

Houghton Area Master Plan
Citizens Review Committee
Meeting Summary
May 13, 2003

CRC members attending: Peter Backus, Sarah Craighead, Margaret Fowler, Margie Hildebrand, Curtis Lueck, Carl Maass, John Macko, Linda Morales, Peggy Nolty, Cathy Rex, Frank Salbego, Thomas Saylor-Brown, Roy Schoonover, Phil Swaim, Michael Tone, Frank Wilczek

Staff attending: Michael Wyneken, Barbara Hayes, Nicole Ewing, Freda Johnson, Leslie Hunten

Meeting moderator, Freda Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.. She reviewed the CRC ground rules and the meeting agenda. Michael Wyneken introduced Greg Keller of the State Land Department (SLD). Greg distributed copies of a handout entitled "Legal Requirements for Trust Lands". He presented background information as described below.

The 1981 Urban Lands Act allows states to plan and zone land for "highest and best" use. The 1998 Growing Smarter statutes mandate every city to create or update a General Plan. It also mandates that the State Land Department create a Conceptual Plan for all state trust land within 3 miles of major cities, including Tucson. The Urban Land Planning Oversight Committee reviews the plans that come from the SLD prior to the plans going to the Commissioner, and then being integrated into the local General Plan. There are 600,000 acres of Urban Trust Land in Arizona, and Conceptual Plans are done for almost 400,000 of those acres. A large concentration of state land is south of Tucson in an area called "the Southlands", which is close to the HAMP.

There are four steps in Conceptual Plan development: data collection, suitability analysis, alternative plans, and preferred alternative. There are 22 layers of data involved in a Conceptual Plan, and ten of them have the most impact on how land is developed. Some layers of data are for slope, floodplains, archeological sites, power line corridors, and natural and man-made hazards. This information is plugged into a model, and alternative options are developed. The SLD then proposes the best option, called the Preferred Alternative.

The State holds six categories of land: forest, agricultural, mineral, commercial, grazing, and API – Arizona Preserve Initiative created in 1996 by the Arizona Legislature. Land goes to auction in response to a request from a buyer. The land is officially appraised which establishes the initial bid. The buyer must put 10% down. The price reflects the value of the lease which can go up to 99 years. When land is sold the money goes into the Permanent Trust, which is currently well over a billion dollars and continuing to grow. Money from commercial leases goes directly to the beneficiary designated for that land. The money benefits fourteen beneficiaries, including the K-12 Common Schools, the

School for the Deaf & Blind, the Miners' Hospital, the Pioneer Home, and other public institutions.

Questions from the committee, and responses are noted below:

1. Could you define the four steps in plan development?

A suitability analysis produces a map that indicate areas of high, moderate and low suitability for development. Alternative plans are developed including a baseline, secondary, and third level which is "most aggressive". These plans are reviewed by the State Land Commissioner, Directors of Disposition and Planning, and the best features of each are collected into the Preferred Alternative. The Urban Lands Planning Oversight Committee looks at the plan within the larger picture, for balance with outside needs. Then the County Board of Supervisors or City Council approve the integration of the plan into the General Plan. There is also opportunity for local input.

2. What is the status of the land in HAMP that is about to be auctioned?

It was auctioned about a year ago by Wolfswinkel a firm in Phoenix and it is currently in litigation. Also, in the vicinity of Houghton and Valencia the Vail School District has applications.

3. What is the nature of the disagreement under litigation?

It has to do with the placement of a commercial parcel at the northwest corner. There may have been a misunderstanding regarding its location. Greg stated this is the extent of his knowledge about it.

3. Who put a commercial parcel deep inside this state land? It's on the corner of a gunnery range with unexploded munitions.

The city has been interested in this property for development. However it is indeed a "FUDS" (acronym for a formerly used defense site.) This was probably mostly small-arms fire, not large munitions. The danger zone probably dissipates quickly as you go away from the center. However, the SLD has not done testing here, so no one knows for sure at this time what may be present on the site.

4. What is the sales application process, and the timeline?

The process takes anywhere from 6 months to 2 years, depending on the complexity of the parcel, and on political processes such as support from the governor. The SLD is required to do ten weeks of advertising in local newspapers before the auction occurs. The purchase occurs on the courthouse steps.

5. What size is the parcel currently being auctioned in HAMP off Valencia at Houghton

About 1500 acres. The commercial parcels will be leased, not sold. SLD policy has been to sell land suitable for residential development, and lease land for commercial use. This maintains the land within the state land portfolio.

6. What is the API?

The Arizona Preserve Initiative. It provides a mechanism for a non-profit entity such as a city or foundation to petition the Commissioner to re-classify the land as API, suitable for conservation. Land is in six classifications as described above. The state doesn't sell land for grazing, agricultural or mineral or forestry purposes. These are the original classifications. Land must be re-classified as commercial or API in order to be sold. API is often applied to steep slopes or washes, but can include buffer zones.

The land is re-classified for five years. During this time, the purchaser must secure funding. At the end of a total of eight years (including extensions) if funding has not been found, the Commissioner can decide to maintain the API classification or request a re-classification. There is a pot of money for matching funds. This money is portioned out by location, it does not all go to one area of the state.

7. How is land valued for API?

This is an ongoing debate. Some think it should be higher value, others think lower. There is an appraisal process.

8. Are there any API requests in HAMP? What is the situation with Fantasy Island?

Fantasy Island is an API application. There is also an application for Tumamoc Hill. This is a highly political process.

Frank Wilczek provided additional information. He said that Fantasy Island is a piece of land with twelve miles of trails used by the biking community. It is 300 acres of state land valued at about \$600,000 by the city. The Fantasy Island supporters filed an API application 3 years ago. It has an international reputation. The city has a plan for putting a road through the Fantasy Island parcel. Frank offered again to lead a field trip to the area.

Greg agreed to provide a copy of the API statutes to the CRC. There are also copies at the Tucson State Land Department office that can be borrowed.

9. How can we integrate the city and HAMP plans with the state Conceptual Plans?

This CRC will have a great impact on the final plans. There is still opportunity for modification and there will be a blending of visions.

10. Concern about the proposed density in some areas of HAMP.

The charge of this committee is to take the concepts from the Calthorpe presentation, and the Conceptual Plan, and balance livable community concepts with what the market will bear. Rita Ranch is 3-6 units per acre. Can a development of eight homes per acre be marketable? Request was made that staff respond to the density issue at a future meeting.

11. Will schools be built on major roads, so that children have to cross busy streets?

Vail has a plan to combine a high school with a regional park, and yes this will be on a major road.

12. Does the city buy park land, or is the developer required to donate areas for parks?

This can happen both ways.

13. Does the developer need to request rezoning after purchase?

If the area has a General Plan or Conceptual Plan, it will already be zoned, with housing, commercial, schools already planned in.

14. The funds produced by commercial leases go into the Permanent Fund, but the taxes produced by commercial use stay in the local area, correct?

Yes.

15. Can the Conceptual Plan be influenced by local reaction, such as “local outrage”?

The Growing Smarter Initiative included zoning into the General Plan. Michael W pointed out that now, local meetings and input are strongly encouraged. Developers are told that due diligence includes getting local feedback for their plans.

16. Can we get a copy of the Plan in map form?

It will be provided by Greg to the CRC.

In closing, Greg asked the CRC to understand the role of the SLD in two respects: working for the best interests of the beneficiaries of the State Land Trust, and working with the committee to help create a plan that will benefit the long-term best interests of the state overall in regards to land development.

Committee Business

Freda requested that we defer approval of the last meeting’s summary until the next meeting, because no one had seen it yet. This was accepted. Once staff resources are

assigned to the HAMP, the CRC will be asked to look at actual areas of land in HAMP that are buildable, explore the relationship with transportation, and identify where housing and parks would be. Michael distributed copies of a HAMP work plan spanning the period from June 2003 through April 2004. Initial work would be done on urban form issues, followed by a needs and location analysis. Finally, urban design and implementation would be addressed.

A question arose about the pygmy owl. Michael stated that research so far shows that the owl is not an issue, however the pineapple cactus may well be in the project area.

Another question arose about more consultants presenting information, and whether anyone has developed an area this big. Michael stated there are several large master planned communities in the Phoenix area. He said he would bring in other examples and maps that should give us a better understanding of housing densities, placement of services and amenities. Greg offered to provide plans for DC Ranch, Saddlebrooke Heights, and Desert Ridge. There are also smaller ones in Tucson that can give us a sense of the elements and the transition between high density, lower density and open space. A member expressed an interest in preserving open space and views in the HAMP plan.

A member expressed interest in holding study sessions or workshops for the CRC so that members could be thoroughly briefed on issues. There was a question about holding public meetings or other methods of getting public feedback on the HAMP and whether we could team up with ADOT and their transportation corridor study process. Michael noted that CRC meetings are open to the public, and the committee has been structured to be well rounded and representative. He said that more effort can be made to get word out to the public about CRC meetings.

There was a question about whether the website can point us to links and resources between meetings. Michael replied that staff would investigate this. He reported that there is an excellent website called planetizen.com, a national land planning resource. In response to a question raised at a previous meeting about a listserv for the CRC, Michael replied that since not all members have access to email, the city will not sponsor a listserv because of equality issues. Also, he said that committee business should be conducted at announced CRC meetings.

Michael made reference to materials distributed to CRC members: the color handouts from Timothy Rood's presentation last month, and the PowerPoint handout from James Keene, City Manager. The photos that CRC members took will be presented soon, grouped into elements.

There was a question about the status of interim policies, whether they had been approved by the Mayor and Council and whether the SLD was ready to endorse them. Staff said that a report would be made at the June 10 meeting.